THE LECTVRES OF SAMVEL BIRD OF IPSWIDGE VPON the 8. and 9. chapters of the second Epistle to the Corinthians.

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1598

BRITISH
MUSEUM

TO THE VVORSHIPFVLL Mis. MOORE AT TALmage Hall in Briſet.

THe motherly affection that you haue borne towardes many, and towardes my ſelfe (good Mis. Moore) puts me out of all doubt, that this ſpeach of bountifulnes and liberalitie ſhal finde good entertainement at your hands. And I the more willingly commend theſe my labours vnto you, becauſe of the bleſſed memorie of your good husband M. Moore, vnto whoſe doings the Lord hath ſet a moſt viſible ſeale, by that bleſsing wherewith he hath bleſſed your children. For whereas commonly the kindred, eſpecially the children, are woont to coole the liberalitie of bountifull perſons, yet it hath pleaſed God ſo to bleſſe your children, that they haue

rather strengthened your handes in this worke. This speach may perhaps seeme to some to haue some cunning in it. But beeing priuie to my selfe of my simplicitie in this matter, and knowing that the Apostle doth for the like respect make an open proclamation to all the world of the bountifulnes of the Macedonian Churches, I haue thereby beene encouraged to say as I haue said. Thus desiring the Lord to strēgthen you in euery good dutie, and nothing doubting but that the God of all mercie which hath promised to shew mercie to the mercifull, will most assuredly comfort you in any distresse of sicknes, or any other trouble that your old yeares may bring in vpō you, especially at the great day, 2. Tim. 1.18. with thankes for all your friendship, I heartily wish you well to fare in the Lord. 1597. Decemb. 16.

Samuel Bird.

To the Christian Reader.

TO the ende, good Christian Reader, thou mightest see the strong arguments and the great varietie of the which the Apostle doth vse in this treatise of liberalitie and bountifulnes, I thought it good first of all to Epitomise and to anatomise these two chapters: and as it were in a glasse first generally to set them before thine eyes, before I come to the particular handling of them. For howsoeuer coloured and rhetoricall brauerie as paintings loose their grace, vnlesse they be looked vpon a fare off: for after the sound of them, if a man would call to minde what is the substance of that which he hath heard, if a man in this manner shall come any thing neare to take a good view and survay of any such speach, and shall looke vpon the ioynts of it, the force thereof is gone. On the other side toward sound arguments, the nearer that a man approcheth vnto thē, the more migh-

tie are they to allure the beholder to a liking of them. The second sight of them pleaseth a man better then the first.

2. Corinth. chap. 8.

Vers. 1. First therefore the Apostle doth moove the Corinthians from the great worke and grace of God bestowed vpon the Macedonian Churches.

2 Who notwithstanding they were in affliction and in great powertie, in which kinde of estate men commonly thinke that they are to be borne withall though they doe not thinke vpon the poore estate of other men, yet euen in this poore estate they releeued their brethren.

3 And that more then their estate with ease could beare.

4 Neither did they tarrie vntill they were haled thereunto by the perswasion of other men: but of their owne accord they offered, and that with great instance that their reliefe for these poore men, who notwithstanding their diuers infirmities,

were yet the Saints of God, vpon whome all our delight ſhould be ſet. They deſired therefore that their reliefe for them might be receiued.

5 Thus was their bountifulnes euen beyond our exſpectation, neither were they thus liberall to be fauoured by the vertue thereof in ſome corruption, as ſome haue beene, which would giue riuers of oyle that they might be diſpenſed withall in their ſinnes. But they reſigned euen themſelues to the will of God.

6 Neither did they content themſelues with that that they were hardly able to giue, but they mooued others alſo to doe this dutie.

7 Wherefore, Oye Corinthians, to the intent that no diſgrace may ariſe to that knowledge, and faith, and diligence that is in you, let not this grace be wanting.

8 Though it be the commandement of God that you ſhould giue, yet that this dutie may come more willingly from you, I haue thought it good therefore rather to

stire you thereunto by the examples of o-
thers.

9 If a man shal thinke that the poore are not such worthy men, that for their sake a man should diminish that which he hath: howe much more then might Christ our Lord haue so thought.

10 If you shall performe this duty, you shall haue this comfort, that it was a thinge done by aduise and counsell: and therefore you may be bold to venture vpon it, being such a duty as you your selues also are alre-dy perswaded that it ought to be done.

11 I would haue you to consider, that when you haue purposed to do this thing, yet it is not therfore done except you stirre vp your selues anew to the doing of it.

12 As for the charges of house-keeping or any such matter, neuer obiect it, for god only requires that we should giue of that which we haue.

13 The Lord his meaning is, not that we should giue vnto those that haue lesse neede then our selues.

14 But that they in like manner, should

giue

giue vnto you, when you haue neede to be releeued by them.

15 That there might be equality, and all indifferency vsed that may be.

16 You may see that god his meaning is, that you shoud giue, in that he hath rayſed vp such an excellent man, to mooue you to this duty.

17 For he was quickly mooued euen of his owne accord, to performe that duty, that is wont to be accounted so thankeles: whereby you may vnderstād what a good forwardnesse he hoped for at your hands.

18 It should be a meanes to make you giue more liberally, because you see that the collectours are excellent men, and will most certenly deliuer that which you shall giue.

19 For how much you doe detract frō giuing: so much doe you detract from the glory of god, that is, to be magnified in the fidellity of those men: and so much the further of also are you, from shewing a ready minde, hauing such incouragements to go by. For by the greatnes of those that goe

vpon

vpon this embassage, you may well thinke that the matter is great that is to be delt in.

20 21 The manner also of the dealing of these men, in the deliuery of that they are put in trust with all: is such as none may doubt of their fidellitie in this busines.

22 The diligence also that they will vse, beeing incouraged therevnto, by the good hope that they conceiue of you, should not a little mooue you.

23 In that Titus was such a one, as the Apostle thought to be a meete man to be his companion, and fellow helper, in that great worke of the ministerie. And that towards themselues, which had so good experience of him: no man therfore needeth to doubt of his fidellitie in this busines. As for the other two brethren, they were the messengers, not of particular men, but of the whole churches.

24 He doth therefore infer vpon his former speech, that that which was done before them, was done before al the churches, whose messengers they were: who are euen the glory of Christ.

If there were not some other speciall occasion, it were superfluous for me to write vnto you touching ministering to the saints.

2 For the redines of your minde this way is such, that I boast my selfe of your preparation, (& that so long agoe) to those of Macedonia, & this your zeale hath prouoked many.

3 4 But yet lest those, to whome I haue so much boasted of you, should at their cõming (to your and my further shame) finde you vnprepared: to prevent this great inconvenience, I haue sent the brethren to giue you knowledge of this thing before they come.

5 That you may finish your benevolẽce, lest it being to be finished at their cõming, they should account you a sparing and not a forward people.

6 Remember therefore that your benevolence, is as seed which is not lost when it is throwne into the ground; but the lesse you sow, the lesse crop shall you haue: and

the

the more you sowe, the more plentiful wil your harueſt be.

7 Alwaies provided, that the manner of your ſowing be with purpoſe of heart, and not onely to avoide the hard opinion that thoſe of Macedonia might otherwiſe haue of you, for God requires of you that it ſhould be your owne wil & your owne deede.

8 Neither be you afraid if you be bountifull, that then you ſhall never hold out in this duty, for God that hath giuen you a promiſe, is able alſo to performe it.

9 For there is a generall proclamation of this mercy, to all that will performe this duty.

10 And we haue a pledge of this his fauour, in that he bleſſeth the ſowing of the husbandm̃: ſo that thereby he hath wherwithall to maintaine his family, and alſo to ſowe againe (and that more plentifully) the next yeere after, he that doth the one will alſo performe the other.

11 That thereby you might be made rich in the beſt thing, euen in the liberality

which

which being practiſed towardes a people, that by the preaching of the Goſpell haue learned whome to thanke for it, god alſo by this meanes may haue that honour that is due vnto him.

12 For this ſacrifice (as I may tearme it) is not onely not a waſting in vaine of the things that we haue, beeing beſtowed where neede is, and fitting the neceſsities of thoſe that are euen our owne fleſh; but God alſo thereby hath that duty performed vnto him, euen the duty of thankefulnes, that of all duties he doth moſt highly accouut of: and that not alſo by a fewe but by many.

13 Howſoeuer god accepteth very well of thankes for euery of his common mercies, yet when his great gift of humbling any vnto the Goſpel is acknowledged, becauſe the wotld doth not make any reckoning of it: this thankefulnes is acceptable vnto God in the higheſt degre. Seeing therefore that thankes this waies ſhall be giuen vnto God by meanes of our boũtifulneſſe, which beeing giuen in this man-

ner is a token of the submitting of you
selues thereunto. If any thing, then thi
thing should incourage you vnto this duty
Besides this God shall also haue thanke fo
the good that redoundes thereby euen vn
to the bodies of men.

14 In respect of your selues, also you
releefe shal be to great purpose, for the lor
hath put a blessing into the handes of af
flicted persons, to bestow vpon those tha
doe releeue the. And those that of all me
cā do most with God shal pray for you. Be
sides this to haue good men long to be i
our company, to delight to heare of vs, i
is a greater blessing then we take it to be
which notwithstanding shal come to pas
by meanes of this duty.

15 I am not able to expresse the excel
lency of the great gift of God, when he o
peneth mens hearts to releeue their poor
brethren: and I nothing doubt, but tha
God will worke this great thing in you
And therefore thankes be vnto God fo
this vnspeakable gift.

THE LECTVRES OF SAMVEL BIRD VPon the 8. and 9. chapters of the second epistle to the Corinthians.

1 *We doe you also to wit brethren, of the grace of God bestowed vpon the Churches of Macedonia.*

2 *Because in great triall of affliction their ioy abounded, and their most extreame powertie abounded vnto their rich liberalitie.*

3 *For to their power I beare record, yea and beyond their power they vvere vvilling.*

4 *And praied vs vvith great instance that we would receiue the grace & fellowship of the ministring which is towards the Saints.*

THe ſcarſitie of all things hauing beene ſo long time vpon our lande, as our fathers neuer knew the like, it muſt needes be a very neceſſarie doctrine that ſhall afford vs helpe and comfort againſt it: eſpecially if we conſider how acceptable a ſeruice the relieuing of our brethren will be at that time when we would moſt gladly be comforted. For though the Lord in mercie will reward euery good worke of his ſeruants, yet by a certaine kinde of excellencie the relieuing of the poore members of Chriſt Ieſus is in a moſt ſpeciall manner remembred, Matth. 25. Becauſe therefore the holy Ghoſt hath ſet downe his will vnto vs more fully and particularly touching this dutie then in any one place of the whole Bible throughout: hauing purpoſed through the aſsiſtance of God his grace to ſpeake of the doctrine of reliefe; I thought it good to make choiſe of this portion of ſcripture. In theſe two chapters the Apoſtle goeth forwarde to take vp the handling of thoſe things that he

he had mentioned in his first epistle & the last chapter, the beginning of the chapter: & this was the occasion of his speech. The prophet Agabus tould of a famine that should be throughout all the world, by meanes whereof the poore churches of Ierusalem were in great danger of perishing, if they were not greatly relecued: wherevpon the Apostle tooke order that the Gentiles might be mooued to contribute vnto them. Act. 11. 28. Gal. 2. 10. The Apostle therefore hauing mooued the Corinthians in this matter, 1. Cor. 16. 1. and finding them not so forward as was to be wished, he prouokes them againe vnto this duty, with a large exhortation, & with many arguments. 1 And because exāples are of great force to drawe men vnto duty, he therefore certifieth them what the poore churches of Macedonia had done in this matter; by the which practise of the Apostle, we are taught this lesson: namely, that when we vnderstand of any, that haue dealt liberally and bountifully with their poore brethren in these hard times, that

we ſhould be talking to them of this matter, for it is a forcible motiue to mooue them to this dutie. When the commaundement of giuing is onely ſtood vpon, anſwer is woont to be made, that we ſhould doe ſo. But who doth it? when therefore we bring forth the parties that haue done ſo, that ſhift is taken away. The argument that the Apoſtle doth here vſe is of very great force, in ſo much that when no other argument will preuaile, this is thought meete euen then to perſwade, Rom. 11.14. when the Iewes had reiected the Goſpell. The Apoſtle thought that the telling of them that the Gentiles had receiued it, would be of force to recouer them againe. And to ſpeak more particularly cõcerning this preſent dutie; Salomon when he will mooue euen the hard hearted vſurer to leaue off his hard dealing, and to be mercifull to the poore, he vſeth no other reaſon but this that the Apoſtle hath here, Prov. 28.8 namely to prouoke him by the example of others: *He*, ſaith Salomon, *that encreaſeth his riches by vſurie and intereſt, gathe-*

gathereth them for him that will be mer-
tifull to the poore. The vſurer hath no ſuch meaning that his goods ſhould be ſo emploied, but Salomon tells him that it will fall out ſo. And it were better that he himſelfe ſhould beſtowe his goods well, then that others ſhould doe it when it ſhall be no thanke to him. If it ſhould mooue the vſurer when he is tolde what will fall out hereafter, when men therefore be tolde what hath beene done alreadie, it ſhould much more affect them. Men commonly are wont to certifie their neighbours of the eſtate of thoſe that purchaſe and grow in wealth: but this is a meanes to worke enuie in them, and to mooue them to the like worldlines. The certificate that is here ſpoken of, is a thouſand times better: for it raiſeth vp the affections of men to the loue of mercie. We are alſo further to note out of the firſt verſe, that the Apoſtle doth account it a benefite to the giuer that he doth giue. For the Saints of Ieruſalem were the men that were relieued, yet the Apoſtle ſaith, I certifie you of the grace or

gift of God bestowed vpon the churches of Macedonia that were the giuers. And this is agreeable to that saying of our Sauiour Christ, *It is an happier thing to giue then to receiue*, Act. 20. 35. And Paul confirmeth this matter, Philip. 4. 17. when he telleth them that he was desirous to haue them bouutifull, not saith he, that I desire a gift: but I desire the fruit that may further your reckning. The spech that the Apostle doth vse is borrowed from the practise of such as vse traffique one with an other in this world. As he that vttereth wares to any chappeman, the more he vttereth the greater will his gaine be in the account when he comes to reckon: so is it in this matter. Men commonly account it a burden, a losse and an hindrance, but the Apostle calleth it a grace and a gift, that poore mẽ should giue as they did. If men had had the inditing of this storie, they would onely haue told vs what a great gift the Saints of Ierusalẽ receiued of the Macedonians: but to haue written thus, I doe you to wit concerning the grace of God bestowed

vpon

vpon the Churches of the Macedonians: it would neuer haue come into their heads but we are taught to acquaint our mouths with such speaches. Besides other reasons if it be considered that in the fearefull fall of many, it is vsed as an argument to assure men that they are not of that number when they are bountifull to the Saints of God, Hebr. 6. 9. and 10. we shall then see that not without cause it is called a grace or a gift. 2 He doth nowe tell vs what that grace was that was bestowed vpon them, namely that though they were in affliction, yet were they not oppressed therwith, but had faith in the Lord, and reioyced in him with ioy of others, opened their hearts to giue plentifully of that little which they had vnto their brethren. By reioycing in God, they prouided very well for themselues in their affliction against worldy sorrow; for as in the bodie, cold diseases are healed by hot things: so in the soule, worldly griefe is healed by godly ioy. If men in their troubles would reioice in the Lord, they would not then thinke

other things, health, wealth, liberty, or any other worldly commodity ſo delightfull: that for the want thereof they would fret againſt God. And if mē will examine whē they are ouertaken of fretting, they ſhall finde that at that time they did not reioice in the Lord, that they did not delight in his word, muſing much vpon his faithful promiſes, vntil they were delighted therwith. A man cannot be alwaies in griefe, and we would gladly delight in ſomething: if not in God, then in worldly matters, which when we ſee that we haue not, then we fret; and here we ſee a difference betweene ſpirituall and fleſhly ioy. The one, if any thing falls out otherwiſe then well, the life of it is cleane takē away: the other though it be hindred with troubles yet it ſtill remaineth. The ioy that he ſpeakes of was in the Lord, which alwaies remaineth good and gratious vnto his ſeruants, to miniſter matter of reioycing vnto them. Phillip. 4. 4. The reioycing in trouble, and their bountifulneſſe are both ioyned together, & are made one and the ſame grace: for whē the

heart

heart is bent to bestowe any thing, there is ioy, the heart is opened and inlarged. On the other side, when the heart is oppressed with griefe, it is so pēt vp that it is nothing ready to any duty. Hebr. 12. 12. *Lift vp your weake handes & your weake knees* saith the Apostle. The wicked by busiyng themselues about other matters, labour to auoid the sence of euil, with sporting themselues, and by driuing away phansies as they say: but the godly euen from the affliction gather matter of cōfort; *The Lord will doe me goodeuē for this mans railing*, saith the Prophet, 2. Sam. 16. They cōfort thēselues with this, that whome the Lord doth loue, he doth chastice. When men are in trouble, they thinke that they are to be borne withall though they minde no mans matters but their owne: but wherefore doe you looke so sad, saith Ioseph, to those that were in prison, Gen. 40. 7. And Paul a prisoner writeth comfortably for Onesimus. And the Macedonians in afflictions comforted and relieued the poore Saints of Ierusalem. 3 By saying that

they gaue aboue their ſtrength, his meaning is, not that they gaue ſo that they were forced to take of others, as may appeare in the 12. verſe: for that were to rob Peter and to pay Paul. But this his meaning is, that beſides giuing as much as they were able: they wiſhed alſo that they could giue more; for as in ſtrait hearted men, their wil is not ſo large as their gift, though it be but a little that they doe giue. So in open hearted men, though they giue as much as they are able, yet is their deſire to doe good, larger then the gift: they are ſo mindeful to pleaſure the party whome they loue, that they forget themſelues, 1. Cor. 13. 5. The Apoſtle doth offer himſelfe to be a witneſſe to teſtify in this matter. He no doubt, required of their eſtate, that he might be able to teſtifie: otherwiſe the Corinthes might haue obiected, that euery man, euen thoſe that haue mony enough, when any good bargaine is offered; yet when there is any ſpeech of giuing, they will then be accounted poore men. The Apoſtle ſaith, that he cā teſtify that it was not ſo with the

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Macedonians. And we are to obserue, that although other Churches did contribute as well as those of Macedonia, as namely the Galatians, 1.Cor.16.1. and the Romans, Rom.1. 5.26. yet because those of Macedonia (though poore) were forwarder then the rest, therefore doth he make choice of propounding their example both to the Corinths, and also to the Romanes: for the Lord looketh not to the greatnes of the gift, but to the greatnes of the affection, which cannot be great in a rich man except he giueth very much. And therefore the Apostle doth not speake of the quantitie of money which they gaue, but he propoundeth vnto them their giuing aboue their strength, that thereby he might raise vp the like bountifull affections among the Corinthians. 4 Their readines in giuing is further commended: for they did not stay vntill they were intreated, but they offer and that earnestly their liberalitie before they were intreated. The common manner is to thinke that men haue neede when they begge, or some others make

request

requeſt in their behalfe, but theſe men ſaw that the Church of Ieruſalem could not chooſe but want, without any admonition. This forcing of men to goe a begging is a very diſorderly courſe: for thoſe that haue leaſt neede will be forwardeſt in begging: and therefore *he that will not labour let him not eate*, ſaith the Apoſtle. On the other ſide, many will be in very great extremitie before they will begge. This forcing of men to aske is a ſhaming of them, nay it is a ſhaming of a man when another beggeth for him in his preſence. For if a man be aſhamed when a man muſt bring forth his owne meate, beeing but a poore diet, and eate it in the preſence of thoſe that haue a more liberall diet before them, 1. Cor. 11. 22. then is it a ſhame to begge other mens meate. The relieuing of widdowes is called an honouring of them, 1. Tim. 5. when we account them worthie to be relieued: but ſhaming and honouring of them cannot ſtand together. That reliefe is moſt acceptable vnto God, that is moſt comfortable to the parties that be relieued:

lieued: but giuing without begging is moſt comfortable: therefore that muſt needs be moſt acceptable. A man his friend may doe many things for another which himſelfe may not ſo well doe, amongſt which things this that is here ſpoken of, is one of them. In that the Macedonians did offer ſo earneſtly before the Apoſtle would take it, it may appeare that though the Apoſtle would faine haue the poore relieued, yet he was warie & circumſpect of whome he did take it: ſo that all that is offered, muſt not be taken neither for our ſelues nor for others, but conſideration muſt be had what is conuenient. When Abſolon bad Dauid to a feaſt he refuſed to goe, 2. Sam. 13. 25. for feare of beeing ouer-chargeable: for when inferiours inuite their ſuperiours in a brauerie, they are wont to be aboue meaſure in their prouiſion: Dauid therefore would giue no encouragement to any ſuch courſe. Otherwiſe except there be ſome ſpeciall occaſion, there is want of loue in it. And therefore the Apoſtle doth make an apologie

pologie in his owne defence, when he refuseth the kindnesse of the Corinthes, 2. Cor.11.11. The cause wherefore he doth not receiue the liberality of the Macedonians, before it was forced vpon him with great intreaty was, because of their poore estate. Other causes also there may be of this refusall, as namely when a man seeth that the party that offers the gift, his other behauiour is not answerable and suitable to this pretented kindnes: but that he seeketh thereby to insult vpon his brother, and to giue him to vnderstand thereby, that he is able to bestowe somewhat vpon him. When a man by receiuing a gift, shall abridge himselfe of that liberty that it is meete a man should haue in his dealings & conuersation with him, then a man is to giue no allowance to any such matter, as may appeare by the example of Abraham, Gen.14.23. For it is al one as if a mā should sell his birth right for a messe of pottage. It falls out sometimes that when a man is to deale with a chapman, he will bidde him to dinner, but he will make him pay deere-

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ly for it in the bargaine. He doth againe call the gift of the Macedonians a grace, thereby to drawe men the rather to giue. For that which makes men so loth to giue is, because they thinke that it is their own, not considering that they are onely dispo-sers of the manifold graces of god, 1. Pet. 4. 10. as stewards, and must be countable to their master for them, whether they haue vsed them to the best advantage of their masters credit. Luke, 16. 1. The name of grace will also take away the opinion of desert; Rom. 11. 6. And therefore Dauid when he had made such goodly prepara-tion for the most glorious temple that e-uer was in the world. 1. Chro. 29. 14. yet saith he, we haue giuen thee that which is thine owne. He calleth it the fellowship of the ministring, because the Apostle did go with the releefe that was gathered, 1. Cor. 16. 4. For then will men be willing, when they knowe that the party that doth carrie it, will distribute it faithfully. On the other side, we see howe vnwilling men be to giue to proctours, of whose trust & faith-

fulnes

fulnes they may very well doubt: and that the poore houses for whome they gather shall haue but a litle of the collection. If therefore we will haue men willing to giue, we must be very carefull to appoint such collectours as are of great credit with the consciences of such as are to giue. It is not also to be omitted, that the poore here and throughout these two chapters, are tearmed by the name of Saints, which is an honourable title: and therefore when he will put the Corinths in minde of the excellencie of their estate, he telleth them that they are Saints by calling, 1. Cor. 1.2. by sanctification is the image of God renued within vs. The Saints of God be those vpon whome all our delight should be set, Psal. 16.3. to moone therefore our selues and others to giue to the poore, we are to consider that they are the Saints of God. The thing that makes vs despise them and be careles of them, is the forgetting that they are rich in faith, and heires apparant to the kingdome of heauen. Iam. 5.2. The Apostle was not ignorant that diuerse

of

of thoſe whome he ſpeaketh of were vnvnruly, and a man may thinke it a ſtrange thing, that the Apoſtle needed to be praied for in this matter; for who would doubt that comming with releeſe, of his beeing welcome vnto them, yet we ſee he prayeth the Romans, cap. 15. 31. to pray for him that this his ſeruice might be accepted of the Saints, Act. 6. 1. If men be mooued to contribute to poore ſchollers in the vniuerſities, from whence the Goſpell hath ſounded into all parts of the kingdome, anſwer is wont to be made, that they are ſo proud in their apparell, that it is pittie that they ſhould haue any releeſe: nowe though ſome forget themſelues that waies, yet all doe not, and they make choiſe of the beſt. If men would accuſtome themſelues to account them the poore ſaints of the vniverſities, as the Apoſtle doth call the poore people of Ieruſalem by that name; and that alſo when he doth thinke vpõ their wãts, Rom. 15. 31. then would men be more ready to giue. The like may be ſaid of the poore people of God euery where. VVe

account

account as well of other things, when they be in the handes of the poore, as we doe when they be in the handes of the rich. In a market or faire, if a poore man will buy any thing, his money shall be as well esteemed of as the money of the rich: and if he will giue but a penny more for a thing, he shall haue it before another: his coyne is as good siluer as an other mans. And why should not sanctification be esteemed of as well in the poorer sort as in other men? The Apostle calleth them Saints which doe now liue, and needed releefe, which is good also to obserue. For if a man should be of the opiniõ of the papists in this point namely, to account no man a Saint whilst he liueth, what great heart should a man haue to releeue any. On the other side, to consider that in the scripture the seruantes of God are not called Saints after their death, but onely whilest they be aliue: and after their death they haue other names giuen them, as Kemnisius against the coũsell of Trent, doth very well obserue, may be a meanes to pull men from Idollatry.

True

True it is, that corruption is mingled with holineſſe, as water is mingled with wine, yet we call it wine and not water: ſo muſt we account the other Saints, though they haue wants in them. The meaning of the Apoſtle, is not that onely the ſaints of God ſhould be releeued: for if thine enemy hunger, feede him. But howſoeuer we muſt do good vnto all, yet eſpecially to the houſhould of faith, Gal. 6. they muſt haue the priueledge of an elder brother, euen a double portion. If the almes of ſome fewe of the Papiſts which are forwarder in giuing then their fellows, were examined by this rule, it would not dazle the eyes of ſome men as it doth.

5 *And this they did not as we looked for: but gaue their own ſelues, firſt to the Lord, and after vnto vs by the will of God.*

6 *That we ſhould exhort Titus, that as he had begun, ſo he would accompliſh the ſame grace among you alſo.*

They are commended for beeing bountiful beyond the exhortatiõ of the Apoſtle. The profeſsion of the Goſpell doth as it

were, promis the releeuing of their poore brethren, so that all that here of the one, will hope of the other: so that those professers which doe not performe this duty, are called in the scripture cloudes without raine. And it is dangerous in the highest degree to disapoint mē of the hope which they conceiue of them; for they are subiect to the curse which was denounced by Christ against the figge tree, *neuer fruite grow on thee hereafter*. But these people are here commended for performing more then euer the Apostle did looke for. And we knowe he looked that euen a labouring man should giue to him which hath more neede then himselfe, Eph. 4. The cause of their liberality is said to be this, namely that they gaue ouer themselues vnto the Lord, they rezined their wil to the will of God: when a man denyeth himselfe, he will soone be brought to giue where neede is, and good reason it is that we should doe so, for we are not our own 1. Cor. 6. We must not liue to our selues but to the Lord, referring all to his honour,

Rom. 12. 1. here I am to doe thy will, O Lord. VVhen men were once ſubdued by the Goſpel, they laide their money downe at the Apoſtles feete, Act. 4. 35. and therefore it is ſaide, they *gaue themſelues firſt vnto the Lord, and after to vs by the will of God. Shall I*, ſaith Dauid, *giue vnto God that that coſteth me nothing*, 2. Sam. 24. 24. 6 They are ſaid to haue done good, not onely by their example, but alſo by their ſpeach. For they intreated the Apoſtle to deale with Titus to goe forwarde with that which he had begunne. By this ſpeach we may firſt of all obſerue the great modeſtie that was in the Apoſtle, who deſired not to be accounted the onely man that dealt with the matter of reliefe: but did moſt willingly acknowledge the forwardneſſe of other men in this matter. VVhen therefore we vnderſtand that others haue dealt a long time together in inflaming the mindes of men to a merciſull regarde of their poore brethren, it is meete that it ſhould be thought vpon. The mindes of men are like to a fire of greene

wood; if in such a fire a man bestoweth much blowing and puffing, it may be that at the last a litle blast setteth all on a flame: yet will no wise man attribute the flaming of that wood to that litle blast, but to the long puffing that went before: so is it in this matter. Therefore our Sauiour Christ when he will teach his disciples to be humble and modest, *Other men*, saith he, *haue laboured* (meaning the prophets which were before them) *and you haue entred into their labours*, Ioh. 4. 38. It was of great force to moove the Corinthians to liberalitie, when they were told that the church of the Macedonians did looke to haue it so: for men are loath but that other churches should haue a good opinion of them. Besides this, though Titus was very readie to performe this dutie, yet because he was loath to ouercharge any, it was to be thought that he would be more sparing in his speaches this waies: but when he was incouraged thereunto by other, and those also poorer Churches, this no doubt did greatly embolden him vnto this dutie.

By

By this meanes also the Corinthians could take the lesse exception against his speach. For if Titus alone of his owne accord onely had made this motion, answer might haue bin made, that Titus had no experience this waies, namely how many waies charges goe out with them that haue dealing in the world. But when other Churches which know what these charges doe meane, doe yet account it needeful to contribute, this stoppeth the mouthes of such as would gainesay this exhortation. These men did not onely giue, but they did also procure other men to giue. If they had onely giuen, though this had beene much in respect of their pouertie, yet otherwise the parties to whome they gaue, should haue receiued but a little. But when besides their owne gift, they moone others to giue, this amounteth to a great deale. To moone others to giue is highly accounted of, 2. King. 4. 8. for because of this dutie is the Sunamite so highly accounted of. And as in warre, drummers are necessarie to make others fight: but then are they most

neceſſarie when they alſo themſelues will fight: then are ſuch as ſtirre vp others to giue moſt neceſſarie. If men in a towne or pariſh haue any ſparkle of zeale in them, ſuch drummers will make them giue. And if men can not ſtirre vp others to giue immediately by themſelues for want of acquaintance, yet ſhould they be ſo zealous as to ſtirre vp by others, as the Macedonians mooued Titus by Paul. It is no reproch but an honourable ſeruice, to begge for other men. For this that is here ſaide of the Macedonians, is not ſpoken to their diſgrace, but to their commendation. They were not of their mindes that except they be the firſt moouers, they will do nothing. A couetous heart is glad to take occaſion to keepe himſelfe from dutie by ſuch excuſes. Theſe men that be ſo affected, may well be compared to reſtie horſes, that will neither goe of their owne accord without the ſpurre, and yet if they be ſpurred, then they will goe backward. The baddeſt ſeruants thinke moſt ſcorne to be quickned vp vnto dutie: but an humble minded man

or woman will soone acknowledge that they stand in neede of admonition: for otherwise we must take away preaching and all admonition. The manner also of mooving Paul to deale with Titus is not to be omitted: for they acknowledge the forwardnes of Titus in that he had alreadie begunne; so that they doe not stir him vp in a bragging manner, as if vnder the pretense of mooving of him their meaning was to vaunt themselues aboue him: for such a kinde of dealing would haue hindered the perswasion. Besides this it should also haue beene daungerous to their owne soules: they onely as it were put him in minde of that which he had begunne to doe before in other churches.

7 *Therfore as ye abound in euery thing, in faith and word, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your loue towards vs: so euen see that you abound in this grace also.*

8 *This I say not by commandement: but because of the diligence of others, therefore proue I the naturalnes of your loue.*

As before he doth exhort them from the liberality of other Churches, so doth he nowe perswade them by their owne forwardnes in other things: that as they had faith, and had knowledge, and vtterance, to impart this their faith vnto others: and were also not idle, but diligent in their affaires: and also loued the Apostle of whome they learned these things: so he would haue them also abound in distributing vnto other their poore brethrē. When a man heareth or seeth others which are plentiful in giuing, yet they cannot speake of matters of religion in so plētifull a manner as we can. We are then in great danger to set so light by this grace of God in them. For we thinke they want that knowledge which we haue, but the Apostle teacheth vs a contrary lesson, namely that to those graces which he had commended in them, they should adde this grace of giuing also, 1. Cor. .5. When a man heareth of any man of account, that can speake of matters of religion, more fully and plentifully then any of their profes-

sion

sion and calling throughout the whole countrey, that he is a graue and a learned man, and of great iudgement in the scriptures yet he shall be noted in liberality to be nothing sutable to that portion which God hath giuen him, nor nothing answerable to the frankenesse of other men, which haue neither that wealth nor knowledge which he hath: this is a great blemish vnto him. And it makes men set lesse by those excellent gifts of knowledge and speech a great deale, then otherwise they would doe. No doubt but that these men amongest the Corinthians which were thus rich in knowledg, gaue something to good vses: or els the Apostle would neuer haue vouchsafed to haue made any honourable mention of their other gifts. But because they were more scant in giuing, then men of meaner vnderstanding, the Apostle would haue them to abound in this duty also, which would giue as great a grace vnto them in the eyes of God and man, as any knowledge, or speech, or any, or all the gifts they had, putting them all toge-

ther:

ther: for that that is to be desired of a man, is his goodnes. Those that haue knowledge and speach in great aboundance, are woont to be noted as chiefe men among the professours: when men therefore shall note them to be somwhat skant in giuing, they will easily imagine that all other professours are farre more skant, as in knowledge, so in giuing: thus doe men bring disgrace to the whole church of God. And it grieues a man when he heareth a man of knowledge noted for hardnes, and he except he would be partiall, cannot tell what to say in his behalfe. 8 The Apostle would haue this dutie of giuing to come naturally from them, as it were of their owne accord: and therefore he saith, *I say not this by commaundement*. He might no doubt haue commaunded them as they would answer to the contrarie at their vttermost perill, when Christ shall come to iudgement, 1. Tim. 6. 17. but for loues sake he chuseth to deale otherwise, that this dutie might not be of necessitie, but willingly, Philemon 14. *Generosus animus*, as one

saith,

saith, *facilius sequitur quàm trahitur*: therefore the Apostle doth labour sweetly to allure them by the example of other churches.

9 *For ye know the grace of our Lord Iesus Christ, that he beeing rich for your sakes became poore, that ye through his poouertie might be made rich.*

To strengthen the example of the Macedonians, he doth warrant it as good by his example that is to order all the Churches in the world. The Apostles, as it may appeare by their writing, in all duties did much looke vpon the patterne Christ Iesus, euen as painters looke much vpon the partie whome they meane to paint out. When they would not haue vs stand vpon our reputation, they alleadge the example of Christ, Philip. 2. 7. When they will moone seruants quietly to put vp the wrongs and iniuries of their masters, they bring forth the example of Christ, 1. Pet. 2. 21. When they will moone husbands to loue their wiues, they alleadge the example of Christ. When they would haue vs

not

not loue in word but in deede, and to lay downe our liues for our brethren, if neede be, they propound vnto vs the example of Christ, Ioh. 3. VVhen they will haue vs to beginne to loue our brethren, and not to tarrie vntill they beginne to loue vs, they propound vnto vs the example of Christ: So here moouing vs to liberalitie, he doth set before our eyes the example of Christ, who beeing the heyre of the world, Hebr. 1. yet to make vs rich, was content not to haue an house to put his head in. If we thinke that the poore are not such worthy men, that for their sakes a man should diminish that which he hath, then much more might Christ thinke so. As therfore the Apostle saith in another place, *Consider him*, that is to say the greatnes of him, Hebr. 12. *that indured such speaking against of sinners*: so is it saide here, that euen our Lord beeing rich, for our sakes became poore: and therefore when men will not giue of their superfluitie, they are farre from following the example of Christ.

10 *And I shew my minde herein: for this*

is expedient for you which haue begun not to doe onely, but also to will a yeare agoe.

11 *Now therefore performe to doe it also, that as there was a readines to will, euen so you may performe it of that vvhich you haue.*

12 *For if there be first a willing minde, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.*

In that the Apoſtle doth offer the matter vnto their conſideration, aduiſing thē by ſaying, *I ſhew you my minde herein*, we muſt not thinke but that this aduiſe of his is to haue the force and authoritie of a cōmandement. VVhen the prophet Dauid ſaith, that *the word of God is his counſeller*, pſal. 119. 24. his meaning is not but that it ſhould command him. But onely his meaning is to allure them ſweetely, and not to drawe them by commaundement to the duty of giuing. He ſpeakes as a meane man may ſpeake to any ſupericur, for the counſell we knowe may aduiſe the prince, though otherwiſe ſhee be to command them: and when ſhee doth follow their aduiſe

uiſe, ſhee is not drawne againſt her will: but ſweetly allured by that equity, and reaſon, which ſhe ſeeth to be in their ſpeeches. In this manner doth the Apoſtle perſwade them to this duty in this place: ſo that though he doth aduiſe them, yet muſt we knowe that this his aduiſe, is to haue the place of a commandement. We muſt not gather as the Papiſts doe from ſuch ſpeeches, that their be in the ſcripture, counſels and commaundements: the commaundements we muſt of neceſsity doe, but for counſels, we are at liberty whether we wil do them or no. And therfore thoſe which follow the counſell and aduiſe that is ſet down in the ſcripture, becauſe they doe more then the lawe requireth, doe therefore works of ſupererogation, as thoſe do that liue a ſingle life, that loue their enemies, and doe ſuch like things. This is no ſuch aduiſe as men may chooſe whether they will doe it or no: na, this and ſuch like ſpeeches doth magnify the word of God in that it is called our counſell, and in that the interpreters thereof, are called our coun-

ſellours:

sellours: for thereby we haue the prerogatiue of kings and princes. Who when any matter is brought vnto them, are wōt to send to their secretary to call their coūsell together. So when we haue any thing to doe, we must call for our counsellers the Prophets and Apostles, and such as can interpret their writings vnto vs: for they are the counsellers of the worlde. *In all thy waies*, saith Salomon, *acknowledge the Lord and he shall direct thee in his waies.* And in these hard times, if men would knowe what regard they should haue of their poore brethren, they should consult with these two chapters, wherein the holy ghost of purpose hath set down his holy will and pleasure vnto vs. The worlde thinkes, that the ministers of the Gospell, take too much vpon them, when they aduise men in these matters: as if men were not wise inough to bestowe that they meane to giue, but that the ministers must aduise them. But there is more wisdome required in this thing then the world is aware of: we knowe what became of him

which

which refused to follow the counsell of the auncient, 1. King. 12. So when men shall choose rather to followe the counsell of wild young men, that would haue a man spend that he hath at drinkings which are needlesse, then vpon their poore brethren; we know what they may looke for, with that rich man in the 6. of Luke. To moone them the rather to follow his aduise, he telleth them that it is expedient or profitable, for he that is wise is wise for himselfe as Salomon saith, *Prouerbes* 9. This argument that is drawn from profit, is woont to be in steede of a 1000. arguments: for tell a man thus, you are not your owne friend if you take not this course, you haue said inough: if he be perswaded of the truth of this saying, it shall be in steed of a thousand sayings. When *Parents* would haue their children to worke, they will let them haue their owne earnings, they knowe that if any thing will drawe them to worke, that will doe it. Howe it is expedient or profitable, we may see in the 9. chapter and eight verse, he tells them that

they

they were willing to this duty a yeere a goe, onely it was laid a side by reason of other matters, so that they were already perswaded that the thing ought to be done: so that he needed not to spend his time in prooving that it ought to be done; for this was already agreed vpon. A man may giue for feare of lawe or for feare of discredit, for what wil mẽ say if I should giue nothing: In this manner a man will giue his purse to a theife, but to doe this thing willingly is thankeworthy. This willingnes is necessary as in all duties, so in this: otherwise a man shall haue many pulbackes to keepe him from this duty; the children and kindred thinke that all is to little for them, and yet we read that Iob had seuen sonnes and three daughters, Iob. 1. 2. yet did he not eate his mursels alone, but the fatherlesse did grow vp with him, he sawe none to perish for want of cloathing, the stranger did not lodge in the streete; men that are of that place which Iob was of, thinke that by reason of that countinance that they are to bare, & their childrē both

whileſt they liue with them, and after their death, that little or nothing is to be giuen, eſpecially when they haue ſo many ſõnes as Iob had and 3. daughters: But Iob was willing to giue, and therefore was not pulled away by any ſuch temptation from this duty. 11. Though they had a minde to giue, yet were they ſlack in performing their purpoſe, for this makes men ſecure, when they haue once a minde to giue, they then neuer doe miſtruſt themſelues, they thinke then it muſt needes be done without any further indeauour. But we muſt ſtrike the yron whileſt it is hot, if we tarry whileſt it be cold, it muſt haue a new heating before we can worke vpon it: we muſt pray vnto God when he hath giuen vs the will, that he would alſo giue vs the deede. In reſpect of men, alſo there is cauſe why we ſhould doe things with expedition, for the deferring of hope is the fainting of the ſoule, and we ſhould not weary the eyes of the widdowe. The reaſon why ſometimes it is dangerous to doe a thing ſuddenly, is becauſe we haue not thought

of

of it sufficiently: but when a thing is rightly purposed there can be no danger in vsing all the expedition that may be. 12. Men are wont to obiect the charges of their family, which makes them that they cannot giue much, and they are ashamed to giue a little. The Apostle takes away all such delaies, by telling them that a man must giue according to that he hath, and not according to that he hath not: and this may minister good comfort to a man, for when one giueth what he may, it is nothing accounted of of the Lord because it is so little: but the Apostle doth assure vs that if a man giue according to his abilitie, God accepteth of it; And as in strength a poore man which vseth that little strength which he hath, is better accounted of both of God and man, then some idle lusty fellowe which hath foure times his strength, and doth not vse it. So he that hath but a little wealth, and yet doth well imploy that little which he hath, is a great deale more to be accounted of then those idle wealthy men, that wil not put forth them-

selues. Men in this matter must consider that they haue to deale with God, from whome they can hide nothing: and therefore if they say that they giue according to that which they haue, beeing notwithstanding priuie to themselues that they haue a great deale more then that which is suitable to that which they giue, men may then deceiue themselues: but as the Apostle saith, *God is not mocked*, Galat. 6. 7.

13 *Neither is it that other men should be eased, and you grieued.*

14 *But vpon like condition at this time your aboundance supplieth their lacke, that also their aboundance may be for your lack, that there may be equalitie.*

15 *As it is written, He that gathered much had nothing ouer, and he that gathered little had not the lesse.*

VVhen any is relieued the Apostle would not haue it to be with the burdening of others. VVhen men be behinde hand, they are woont to get a license to keepe an alehouse, that thereby they may

maintaine themselues and their charge: for other poore men must come to their houses to spend that which they haue, not caring in the meane time what shall become of their wiues and children. This is contrarie to the rule of the Apostle, for when the poore oppresse the poore, it is like a raging raine that leaueth no foode. In some places poore men will bestowe their money at marriages, when the parties that are married, are a great deale wealthier then themselues: and their masters, though they say other men shall be as bold with them whē they marrie their children or seruants, yet there is no likelihood that poore men will euer be so bold with them. The Apostle hath no such craft in his speach. Not but that we must giue without looking for any such recompence. 14. Onely the Apostle assureth thē that there is no partialitie in this thing. For if it should please god to humble the Corinths with like want, he would then be as earnest with those of Ierusalem to contribute vnto them. 15 He bringeth forth good proofe, that this mu-

tuall helpe ought to be amongst the ser-
uants of God, Exod. 16. 18. The people of
Israel were fedde with Manna for a time,
that thereby they might vnderstande in
their ordinarie foode for euer, euen when
this Manna should cease, that they were
not fedde by their owne labour or indu-
strie, but by the blessing of God, as we are
taught, Deut. 8. 3. By this their Manna we
may see as it were in a glasse, how to order
our selues in our ordinarie foode. All the
children of Israel were willed to gather
Manna, and some of them gathered more
according as they were more nimble or
more strong then others, and so they laide
it all on an heape: howsoeuer some gathe-
red more then some other, yet none had
more then an Homer full for his priuate
vse; by which meanes all had enough and
none wanted. The Apostle would haue vs
to make vse of this matter: and although
we haue no Homer to measure our goods
withall, yet seeing neither we nor our
children after vs, should be intemperate in
eating and drinking, in apparell, in buil-

ding,

ding, in houſhold ſtuffe, or in any other matter, that ouerplus which wee haue ſhould be beſtowed vpon others. True it is that wee are to keepe poſſeſsion of that which God hath bleſſed vs withall, as a ſtrong man is to keepe poſſeſsion of his ſtrength: but touching the vſe of our goods, we muſt doe as hath beene ſaide. And if it pleaſe God to humble vs with pouertie, then thoſe that haue more then an Homer full, that is to ſay, more then they neede, they muſt then doe the like for vs. If they did reſerue of their Manna it did ſtinke, it did them no good, Exod. 16. 20. it was full of wormes: ſo when men reſerue couetouſly more then needes, Theeues, as Chriſt ſaith, breake thorough and ſteale, the ruſt eates their coyne, the moath conſumes their garments; not but that among the Iewes ſome had more wealth then ſome other: for the elder brother was to haue a double portion: but becauſe he did maintaine more in his familie then did his younger brother, in the ende all came to one reckoning. When in the Lord his

praier the rich make this petition, *Giue vs this day our daily bread*, they pray not onely for themselues, but for their poore brethren. But when they haue meanes in their hand to releeue them, and doe it not, how then can they be said truly to make this petition? For as a man that praieth for his owne foode, if he vse not the meanes, he may truly be said to tempt God: so when a man desires the Lord to relieue his poore brethren, and God hauing put meanes into his hands to relieue them withall, and yet he will not imploy them. what doth he els but dally with the Lord? And we are to consider that this bountifulnes that is here spoken of, is to be vnderstood of the Saints that doe now liue, least imagining them onely to be Saints that are dead, we doe as the Papists doe, who in the scarsitie of all things, had their dead imagined saints clad and couered with golde, silke garments, pretious iewells, hauing waxe candles set before thē within & without the church at noone daies, when many true Saints of God had no succour bestowed vpon thē.

16 *And thanks be vnto God which hath put in the heart of Titus the same care for you.*

17 *Because he accepted the exhortation, yea he was so carefull, that of his owne accord he went vnto you.*

To mooue the Corinthians to relieue their brethren, he tells them what excellēt men God raised vp to deale in this matter with them: and as before he accounted it a grace to giue, so doth he now account it a grace to stirre vp to giuing. Men are loth to deale in such a matter as men commonly are hardly drawne to performe: and a man of a good dispositiō, if he hath wherwithall, had rather giue all out of his owne purse, then to be troubled with such a kind of businesse, if dutie did not mooue him thereunto. What a tedious piece of work is it for a man to gather that which men are rated at, notwithstanding they cannot chuse but account it as due debt that which they are set at: how loath may men then be thought to be to part from that wherein they thinke that they haue more liber-

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tie. It is the Lord without whose prouidence not so much as a sparrow lighteth vpon the ground. He hath a worke in euery mans minde as it pleaseth him. VVhen Apollos was requested to goe to the Corinthians, he had no minde to goe at that time, 1. Cor. 16. 12. The Lord might haue disposed so in like manner of the heart of Titus. But in that the Lord did otherwise dispose of his heart, they must needes see that it came of God; and therefore they were to yeelde to the motion of Titus in this matter, Gen. 24, 50. As the Apostle tels the Galathians, that they were not to doe as they did, because it came not of God, Gal. 5. 8. Iames 3. 6. So they were to yeeld to Titus, because God stirred him vp in this duty. And he thankes God for it: for the good workes of the seruants of god should cause vs to glorify our father which is in heauen, & is the author of thē, Mat. 5. 16. Titus was mooued by men, but it was the Lord which put into his heart to yeeld to the exhortation. And we are to marke, the exhortation and the worke

of

of God his ſpirit are ioyned together. 17. He is ſaid to be very ready of his owne accord without any great hailing thereunto. And yet as there is no matter be it neuer ſo ready to take fire, that can be ſet on fire, be put to it: no though a man be ready to every good worke, yet he had need to be exhorted thereunto: and the Lord accepteth of it when by exhortation we are brought vnto duty, Heb. 11. 11. Act. 16. 14. The readines which was in Titus to come is worthy of obſeruation: for commonly our hearts are like paper oyled, that hardly receiueth the print of the pen. Fire is the thing whereby we diſpatch moſt of our buſines in our houſes, and a ſlacke fire doth hinder our matters greatly: ſo doth a ſlack affection about any duty. And it was to great purpoſe to tell the Corinthes howe willing Titus was to come vnto them: for it was a ſigne that he had a good liking of them. A man is loth to go to a place where he thinkes he ſhall not be welcome. It is hope which ſets a man a worke to goe to any place: It is that which lifteth vp their

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ſeete to goe any iourney, which was a very good meanes to make them anſwere that good exhortation which he had of them.

18 *And we haue alſo ſent with him the brother, whoſe praiſe is in the Goſpell throughout all the Churches.*

19 And not ſo onely, *But is alſo choſen of the churches to be a fellow in our iourney, concerning this grace that is miniſtered by vs vnto the glory of the ſame Lord, and declaration of your prompt minde.*

18 Barnabas is the party that he ſpeakes of Act.11.30. whoſe praiſe was in preaching of the Goſpell. For not onely the hiſtory, but the preaching of the Goſpell, is called the goſpell, Rom.2.16. Gal.3.1. becauſe it is a meanes to make them giue more liberally, when they ſee that ſuch are the collectours as will certenly deliuer it to the parties to whome it is giuen: therefore he meaneth theſe excellent men. And to the ende that they might not doubt of the deliuery of that which was giuen, he tels the that thoſe ſhall go with it whom they the-

ſelues

ſelues ſhall appoint, 1. 16. 3. Diuers will not giue, though they be neuer ſo faithfull which are appointed the diſtributers of it; they are wont to alleadge that they will giue it themſelues where they thinke meete. But if euery man ſhould doe ſo, what a confuſion would there be? And we ſee how the poore are forced to ſteale, and to beg, when euery one that ſhould giue is left in this manner to his owne deuotion. For this is a true ſaying, that which all men regard, no man regardes. But when there be parties appointed fit for the purpoſe, then the poore ſhall be regarded. Men are wont to alleadge, that they meane to giue more then all the world ſhall be acquainted withall: but indeede the truth is, that none giue leſſe priuately then thoſe that draw backe in a publique collection. The thing which Chriſt reproueth Matth. 6. is, when men giue priuately to be ſeene of men they will doe it in ſuch manner as all the world muſt know it: ſuch boaſting in deede is like the cackling of an henne, who when ſhee hath laide an egge euery bodie

muſt

must know what a worthie act shee hath done. But otherwise for a man to giue as his neighbours doe, in a publike collection vpon a publike agreement, this is not to blow a trumpet before him when he giueth his almes: and if he meanes to giue any further relieſe priuately, he may doe it as cloſely and as ſecretly as he doth deſire. Chriſt doth not condemne, but he doth greatly allow the fact of the poore widow that in a publike collection ſhewed her forwardnes, in giuing as others did publikely, and more franckly (conſidering her poore eſtate) then any of the reſt. 19 He, the ambaſſadour I meane, that was to goe with the money, was not onely commended for preaching, but he was accounted wiſe and faithfull, and therefore fit for this preſent buſines. As much therefore as they did detract from this buſines and miniſtration, ſo much did they detract from the glorie of God, and from the declaration of their readie minde that was ſought therein. For according to the greatnes of thoſe which were to goe vpon that ambaſſage,

they

they might well gather of the greatnes of the matter that was to be dealt in, and of that great desire they had to haue the ambassage to take place, Numb. 22. 15. This wisdom in appointing such excellent men, as it is to be followed in many things, so is it to be followed when men make their Wills. For let mē giue neuer so large legacies, yet if there be failing in the execution, all comes to nothing. The children which are to be fatherlesse, commonly are left to the curtesie of those which haue little affection to them, but to that which they haue: & haue by vertue of their executorship most knowledge and oppertunity to spoile them, *ovem lupo*, or it may be saide of them that they commit the geese to the keeping of the foxe. By marking throughly whether men deale iustly and truely in their affaires, they shall knowe whether they be meete men to be their executors.

20 *Avoiding this, that no man should blame vs in this abundance that is ministered by vs.*

21 *Prouiding for honest things, not one-*

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ly before the Lord, but also before men.

What his meaning is, we may see 1. Cor. 16. 3. for there he saith, *whomesoeuer ye shall allow by letters, them will I send to bring your liberalitie to Ierusalem.* The Apostle himselfe was desired to carry this money, but he would not be alone in this busines: but he would haue witnesses that the money was faithfully bestowed. He which refuseth to offer himselfe to triall in such a matter, may well be suspected. It is but a vaine thing to say god knowes my heart, when I may make my truth and simplicity known also vnto men. When men haue any authority ouer those to whome they are to approoue themselues, then they are wont to disdaine to approue their doings vnto their consciences. But if Paul that had the authority of an Apostle, might stand vpon his own bare credit for the faithfull deliuery of that he was betrusted withall, better then any man in the world, how dare any thē that may a thousand times be rather suspected then the Apostle, stand so vpon their own bare word,

that

that no man may be so bold as to say vnto them, how haue you bestowed the mony that you were betrusted withall. We are to consider of this the rather, because thorough the goodnes of God, we are towards a reasonable order for prouiding for the poore. If those that haue the mony in their handes doe not from time to time very carefully, as much as they may, approoue themselues to the consciences of those whose money they haue receiued, it is to be feared, that in a little time all will come to nothing: and therefore this is one of the things that must as strictly be obserued, as any other thing whatsoeuer that belongeth to this busines. And therefore I beseech those in the feare of God, that haue and are to haue the mony that is gathered in their handes, as they loue their owne credit, and as they delight that men should be encouraged to the dutie of giuing, that the poore Saints of God may be relieued, that they would cause their simplicitie this waies to be so seen, that he that runneth may read it, as the Prophet speaketh.

keth. Men can not be too carefull of this dutie: and therefore if they did cauſe to be drawne in a table what euery man doth giue, & what euery poore man receiueth, and cauſed euery ſuch table to be ſet vpon euery church dore throughout the town, it were a very ſimple and ſyncere and cõmendable order. The keeping of ſome ouerplus in their hands to relieue according as extraordinarie occaſion ſhall fall out, wil marre all, except the people whoſe money it is doe like of this order, and ſee as plainly how this ouerplus is beſtowed as well as the other that is ordinarily beſtowed. All executors may learne a good leſſon from hence: they thinke they are not bound to pay any legacies, except men aske it them: notwithſtanding it falleth out many times, that men know not whether they haue any thing giuen them or no: or it may be they knowe not the time when it is due. And all that haue to deale with receiuing of money, haue here a notable example giuen them by the Apoſtle. Men are woont to flie to the report of ſuch, as either know

not

not their doings, or els will not ſpeake rightly of them. But the Apoſtle prouided that no man might thinke otherwiſe then well of him. He had before his eyes continually the comming of Chriſt, which cauſed him to haue a cleare conſcience both towards God and towardes men, Act. 24. verſ. 16.

22 *And vve haue ſent with them our brother, whome vve haue oftentimes prooued to be diligent in many things: but now much more diligent, for the great confidence I haue in you.*

It is as we haue heard, to great purpoſe, to know who be the parties which ſhall diſtribute that which is giuen: for it will incourage men the rather to giue. If men ſhall diſtribute it at leiſure they knowe not when, this will cauſe men to haue little minde to giue. He muſt therefore be quick and round and readie in his office that is this waies to be imployed. Men had neede to giue good attendance vpon thoſe that are to giue, or els their affection will coole quickly: and the poore that ſhould haue

that which is giuen, can not forbeare it any long time. So that the diligence the Apostle speaketh of we see is very necessarie. And he doth put them in good hope of the partie whome he doth commmend, because he had experience of his diligence in the like affaires: and he doth assure them that they may now much more looke for the like diligence, because of that forwardnes that he did not doubt to be in them. For seeing he was diligent when he had to doe with a backward people, he knew that it would doe him good to be diligent whē he should haue to doe with such a forward people. Men commonly appoint such collectours for the poore as are of some pretie wealth; but to appoint such as will stay the dealings of their owne priuate affaires to attend vpon this publike worke, that will inquire who be sicke, or who haue more speciall neede, and that will euery manner of way bestirre themselues in this worke, this is the thing that is not once thought vpon.

23 *Whether any doe inquire of Titus, he*

is

is my fellow and helper to you ward: or of our brethren, they are messengers of the Churches, and of the glorie of Christ.

24 *Wherefore shew towards them, and before the Churches the proofe of your loue, and of the reioycing that we haue of you.*

That which the Apostle did speake before of those three excellent men in a large manner, adding other matters in the bringing of them in. Now to the end that they might the rather be mooued with their excellencie, he speakes of them altogether without the mingling of any other matter in the speaking of them, that their minde might not be distracted; but that it might wholly be taken vp with thinking of thē. Concerning Titus, he reports of him that he was his fellow and helper, and that to them ward. They were yoked together as it were in one and in the self same work. If therefore they made any reckoning of the Apostle himselfe, then they must needs thinke well of Titus, whome the Apostle made choice of to be his companion in so great a worke. And he working in the

worke of the ministerie amongst themselues, they neede no other witnesses to approoue of him but themselues: for he was the Apostles fellowe and helper to them ward. As for the other brethren, they are the messengers not of particular men, but of whole Churches. If therefore the testimonie of the churches be of account with them, they must then regard that testimonie that is giuen vnto them. 24. He doth therfore infer this vpon his former speach, namely that that which is done before them, is done before al the churches. They were to the churches as committies be to the Parliament house. The whole ordering of the matter was committed to their fidelitie. If in the mouth of two or three witnesses euery word should stand, how much more ought it to stand in the testimonie of whole churches. The churches are of the counsell of Christ, Ioh. 15. 15. and we know that a messenger comming frō any one of the Counsell is greatly to be accounted of, but comming from the whole bodie of the Counsell he is much more to

be

be esteemed. He would haue them therefore to consider, that in these messengers they had to doe with all the churches: and when they were before them, they were before all the Churches, who looked vpon to giue testimonie how they stood affected to the relieuing of the poore Saints of Ierusalem. To this end he maketh mention of the glorie of Christ: for if one man be the image and glorie of God; if the Lord will haue his glorie shine forth in the preheminence of any one Christian, how much more is his glorie represented vnto vs in the ambassadours of whol churches, 1. Cor. 11. 7. When any one of the poore members of Christ are offered vnto vs, Christ himselfe presents himselfe then vnto vs, as Math. 25. But here he presented himselfe after a more glorious manner. The Lord doth as it were glorie in his faithfull seruants. *Hast thou considered my seruant Iob*, saith the Lord vnto satan, Iob. 1. Such excellent men are those that are here mẽtioned. They were such as would glorifie Christ for any good worke that

they ſaw in any of his ſeruants.

CHAP. 9.

1 *For as touching the miniſtring to the Saints, it is ſuperfluous for me to write vnto you.*

2 *For I knowe your readines of minde, whereof I boaſt my ſelfe of you vnto them of Macedonia, and ſay, that Achaia was prepared a yeere ago, and your zeale hath prouoked many.*

The vſe of writing is to certifie the partie to whome he doth write, of that wherof he is either ignorant, or els had neede to be ſtirred vp vnto: but in neither of theſe reſpects was there any cauſe wherefore he ſhould write to the Corinthians: therfore he ſaith touching the miniſtring to the Saints that it was ſuperfluous for him to write vnto them, yet becauſe he had giuen forth euery where to other churches how forward the Corinthians were; and by boaſting thus of them he had as it were entred into bonds for their forwardnes. In

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this respect it was meete that he should put them in minde of this matter. He vseth a certaine kinde of speach called *præteritio*: for he saith, that *it is superfluous for him to write*, and yet he writeth. His meaning is, that it was superfluous to stand long vpon this matter in writing. He doth graunt that they were readie enough of their owne accord, and needed not to be stirred vp by writing; yet because he had boasted so confidently of them, and did thereby as it were enter into bonds in their behalfe; in this respect he dealeth as one that is entred into bonds for another. And in such a case though a man thinks well of the partie for whome he is bound, and doubts not but that he will pay the debt, yet because the forgetting of such a matter would be exceeding dangerous to the partie himselfe, and to the partie that was bound for him: the consideration of the greatnes of the daunger, will cause him to put the partie in minde of the debt, though otherwise he would say nothing. He calls the gift of the Corinths a ministring to the

Saints,

Saints, giuing them thereby to vnderstand, that they are but stewards to bestow the riches of God that he hath betrusted them withall, 1. Pet. 4. 10. The Lord had giuen him his riches as it were by a letter of administration, to giue where neede was. 2 Least the Corinthians should thinke much of the commendation that he gaue of the Macedonians, as if he had made the Corinthians no bodie in respect of them: or as if he had discredited them vnto those of Macedonia, he telleth them that he was so farre from it, that he did boast of them vnto those of Macedonia. And as he took an occasion to stirre vp the Corinths by the example of the Macedonians, so did he in like manner stirre vp the Macedonians by the forwardnes of the Corinthians. Corinthum was in Achaia. The Apostle would not haue spoken so of them, except he had seene some good forwardnes in them. Companie makes euen a dull beast to goe faster: and therefore the Apostle is much in prouoking by examples. And here we see how wisely the Apostle dealeth

leth with the churches of God. We see in both these epistles how plainly he doth reproue the Corinthians, and yet when he speakes to the Macedonians of them, he saith that Achaia was prepared a yeare agoe: so that as he commended the Macedonians to the Corinthians for that they had alreadie done, so doth he commend the Corinths for that they were prepared for to doe. And here we may see the right manner of dealing with the churches of God. When we are to deale with themselues, we are to open vnto them their wants most faithfully: but when we are to speake to others of them, we are then to commend that that is good in them. To encourage Titus that was to goe amongst the Corinthians, he speakes reuerently of them. *If*, saith the Apostle, *I haue boasted anything to Titus of you, I haue not beene ashamed: for our boasting vvas true.* But when he dealeth with themselues, howsoeuer he giues God thanks for that good that was amongst them, yet doth he plainly admonish them, 2. Cor. 7. 14. We see how

how the Apoſtle doth mooue by the example of others: and therefore when we haue an example of ſtrangers that dwell in our owne kingdome, we are very bad ſchollers if we learne nothing by them: their poore are well ſet a worke, none of them goeth a begging: they goe ſweete and cleane, ſo that they may be admitted into any honeſt companie.

3 *Now I haue ſent the brethren, leaſt our reioycing ouer you ſhould be in vaine in this behalfe, that ye as I haue ſaide be readie.*

4 *Leaſt if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you vnprepared: we, (I need not to ſay you) ſhould be aſhamed in this my conſtant boaſting.*

5 *Wherefore I thought it neceſſarie to exhort the brethren to come before vnto you, and to finiſh your benevolence appointed before, that it might be readie and come as of benenolence, and not of ſparing.*

3 Before we heard what hope he had of them, now he doth ioyne a godly feare

to

to this his hope: *res eſt ſolliciti plena timoris amor*. Howſoeuer the ſuſpition and feare that is voide of loue, is condemned in the ſcripture, 2. Sam. 10. 3. yet that ielouſie that is ioyned with loue, and that doth ſtirre vs vp to dutie and watchfulnes ouer thoſe towards whome we carrie this godly ielouſie, is greatly commended in the ſcripture, 2. Corinth. 11. 2. Iob 1. 5. *It may be*, ſaith Iob, *that my ſonnes haue ſinned*. Shame we know is a caſting downe of the minde, and leaueth it voide of all comfort to ſupport it ſelfe withall. The feare of this ſhame made Ezra rather chooſe to hazard life and goods and all that he had, rather then he would bring vpon himſelfe this ſhame, Ezr. 9. 22. This ſhame cauſed him that he would not aske any helpe of the King to whome before he had ſaide, *The hand of our good God ſhall be vpon vs vvithout any ſuch helpe from man*. To preuent therefore this ſo vncomfortable a thing, he thought it good to ſend the brethren before-hande to prepare them, leaſt that thoſe of Macedonia finding

them

them vnprepared they ſhould be aſhamed.

6 This yet remember, that he which ſoweth ſparingly ſhall reape alſo ſparingly, and he which ſoweth liberally ſhall reape alſo liberally.

7 As euery man wiſheth in his heart, ſo let him giue, not grudgingly, or of neceſſitie, for God loueth a chearefull giuer.

6 To mooue them the rather vnto liberalitie, he doth liken it vnto ſowing, and he tells them that as the husband doth not thinke that his ſeede is loſt when he doth ſcatter it into the ground, but that he ſhall gaine greatly by it: and therefore he will not ſow ſparingly, leaſt he ſhould haue but a thinne harueſt, but he will ſow as much as he is able that he may reape accordingly. He telleth them that the caſe ſo ſtandeth in giuing. The hope that the husbandman hath of his harueſt cauſeth him to breake vp his ground to fallow it, and to twy fallow it, and to ſow it, and to harrow it: and all this paines is taken in hope of a good harueſt: for harueſt is that that promiſeth great ioy vnto them: in ſo much that that great

great ioy that is brought vnto vs by Christ Iesus, is likened to the ioy in harueſt, Eſai 9.3. 7 He telleth them in what manner they ſhould giue, as a man wiſheth in his heart. A man muſt not tarrie till the time of collection doth come, and then to giue as ſhall come into his minde: but as in all other duties, ſo in this he muſt purpoſe before hande what he meaneth to doe: *Dum in dubio eſt animus paulo huc atque illuc impellitur*: and therefore men are willed with purpoſe of heart to cleaue vnto God, Act.11.23. And therefore we read that Daniel determined before he came to the triall what he meant to doe, Dan.1.8. He would not haue them giue as of neceſſitie, his meaning is not but that we ſhould inioyne our ſelues of neceſsitie to ſerue God, as in all other dutie, ſo in this. And becauſe we haue a naughtie nature that is againſt all dutie, therefore ought we to offer violence and to force our ſelues to doe well. But when a man ſhall giue by reaſon of that opinion that his neighbours would otherwiſe haue of him, deſiring in the meane

meane time to haue ſpared it, if by any meanes this might haue ſtoode with the ſauing of his credit: to giue of neceſsitie in this manner is that that is here condemned: he mooueth vs therefore to cheareſulnes in giuing, by telling vs that God loueth a cheareſull giuer. The loue of God is ſo comfortable a thing, that it is able to ſweeten the moſt ſowre receipts of affliction: and therefore the Apoſtle tells men that they ſhould hold themſelues very wel contented with affliction, becauſe it is an argument of his loue. Whome God doth once loue he doth alwaies loue: and therefore his vnchangeable decree is deſcribed by louing of Iacob, Rom. 9. The ende of giuing is to cheare the parties to whome we doe giue: when a man therefore ſhall giue a thing in ſuch maner, as if he thought the partie to whom he doth giue vnworthie of it, then the end of giuing is not obſerued. When men ſhall giue a gift with their hand, and call it backe againe with their ſpeach or countenance, this takes away the comfort of the gift: *gratia ab offi-*

cio

cio quodmora tardat abeſt. He that is vnder, may ſoone thinke that he is deſpiſed and accounted a burden to the world. Men therefore ſhould giue in ſuch manner as all ſuch thoughts may be kept from them. When men haue neuer a word with them which may perſwade their geſtes that they are welcõe, it makes their cheere a great deale leſſe then it ſhould be: for it is a true ſaying, that welcome and the ſignification thereof is the beſt cheere. Howe therefore was the father in the entertayning of his ſonne, he brought forth the robe, he put rings on his fingers, he cauſed a fat calfe to be killed, come ſaith he let vs eate and be merry. It is reported of a mercifull man that he was wont to ſay to the parties to whome he gaue any thing, I am as willing to giue it as any man is to take it. How cheereful was Lidia in entertayning of the Apoſtle: If ſaith ſhee, you thinke that I am faithfull to the Lord, then come into my houſe and make account that I make reckoning of the company of the ſeruants of god. Thus ſhee conſtrained them to eate

of her meat, Act. 16. 15. How comfortably did Abraham entertaine his gests, he did runne to meete them, that they might see how welcome they should be vnto him, though he knew them not, and therefore could looke for no benefit from them. The Lord would make Abraham a patterne of this cheerefulnesse: and therefore though the angels which he sent vnto him, stood not in any neede of his meate: yet to take a triall what comfortable entertaynment he would giue vnto them, he offers them vnto him in such a manner as if they had stood in neede of his entertainment. So in like manner the Lord could giue euery man enough to liue of himselfe if pleased him, and that with as little cost or trouble to him, as if he gaue him nothing. But because his meaning is to take a triall how well and louingly men will bestowe their goodes: he doth therefore offer his seruants in their wants vnto them. Abrahã considered that these men were weary in their iourney, that their feete were weary with their trauell, especially trauelling in

the heate of the day, Gen.18.1.7. To refresh them that waies he offers them water for their feete, and a coole seate to sit in vnder a greene tree that they might rest themselues: and because he saw their hearts needed to be comforted after their trauell, he tels them that they shall haue a little bread to comfort them that waies. His meaning was to make them good cheere, but least that the feare of putting him to too much cost should stay them from comming in vnto him as it staied Dauid from going to Absolon, 2.Sam.13.25. He therefore onely maketh mention of a little bread: and he doth reason with them from the prouidence of God, that God his meaning was that they should come into his house, and therefore he gaue them occasion to come that waies. We see how courteously he behaued himselfe towardes them as if he had beene beholding to them and not they to him for comming into his house. It is a rare thing not to be somwhat insolent, and to thinke that they may somwhat ouer looke the parties to whome

they haue giuen entertainment disdaining in the meane time to take the like entertainment at their handes vpon the like occasion. Nowithstanding the Apostle would haue it to be made mutuall and so consequently cherefull cheerfull, 1. Pet. 4. 9. For it taketh libertie away from a man when he hath to deale with those which are otherwise his equalls, if there be refusall to haue the entertainment mutuall. Abraham makes mention to his gests onely of a little bread, but he goeth in to his wife and wills her to make ready with all the speed that might be fiue cakes, and he caused butter, and milke, and veale to be brought in before them: he would not say to his guests you fare not so wel euery day at home; but he makes little of that which he set before them: he standes by them to beare them company, for it appeares he had dined before they came. This cherfulnesse is highly commended by Christ Iesus, and is more regarded then the meate it selfe, Luke, 7. 44. For though the Pharise set meate before Christ, yet because he vsed

no cheerefulneſſe in entertaining of him: he therefore magnifieth the poore womã before him & ſaith, *I entred into thy houſe and thou gaueſt me no water for my feete, thou gaueſt me no kiſſe, thou didſt not annoint my head with oyle as ſhee hath done.* Thus we ſee howe and why the Lord loueth a cheerefull giuer, and that if we will haue aſſurance that God doth loue vs, which loue of his is the cauſe of all the benefits which we receiue from him, then may we giue cherefully.

8 *And God is able to make all grace to abound towards you, that you alwaies hauing all ſufficiency in all things, may aboũd in euery good worke.*

The cauſe of the vncheerefulneſſe in the giuer, is becauſe he feareth himſelfe ſhould want; the Apoſtle tels them that God is of that power, that they neede not feare any ſuch matter, but that they ſhal haue enough both for themſelues and others. The cauſe of all error is becauſe men doe not beleeue the ſcripture, nor the power of God, as Chriſt telleth the Saduces: he doth firſt

therefore commend the power of God vnto them, and afterward the scriptures. The principall proppe that Abraham had to vphold his faith, was to perswade himselfe, that he which promised was able also to performe. In all the articles of our faith, it is most necessarie that we should be perswaded of the power of God, for how shal we beleeue that God made heauen and earth, that Christ was borne of a virgin, but by beleeuing that the power of the highest did ouershadow her: the like may be said of all the other articles of our faith. We hauing therefore the same word of god to warrant that which the Apostle here speaketh of; why should we not beleeue the one as well as the other. The meaning of the Apostle is not to reason onely from the power of god as the Papists doe when they would make vs beleeue that the bread in the sacrament is turned into the body of Christ, because god is able to make it so, for Christ could haue turned stones into bread as Satan would haue had him to haue done, but he would not do it:

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so that although it be a good argument to reason from the power of god, when we are already certified of his willingnes in the thing, yet when we cannot be perswaded of his willingnes in a thing, it is in vaine to speake of his power. The scripture telleth vs that it is not the will of god, to haue his body to be made of a peece of bread that the heauens must hold him vntill his secõd comming. The word of god telleth vs, that all the miracles that Christ wrought, they were apparent to the outward senses of men, in so much that they were astonished, and said we neuer sawe the like in Israel. In that therefore there is no such thing seene in the sacrament, it is plaine that there is no transubstantiation; but in a thousand places we are taught that god will abundantly recompence the liberall person. We see therefore that the reason of the Apostle is good, although the reasons of the Popish Church be not good: the Lord is able to fill them will all sufficiency, for he is called the god of all sufficient. By sufficiency he doth not meane that they shall

haue that which is ſufficient for their own vſe, which notwithſtáding is a great mercie of God to ſoule and bodie. For we ſee how many torment themſelues that haue not a contented minde: they are neuer ſatisfied, for *he that loueth ſiluer ſhall neuer be ſatisfied with ſiluer*, as Eccleſiaſtes ſaith, neither ſhall ſuch haue any vſe of that they haue, Eccleſiaſtes 5.9. On the other ſide, he whoſe heart God filleth with ſufficiencie, hath as much ioy continually as any other man hath, for that little time he is at a feaſt, Prov.15.15. For the Lord therefore to giue vs a contented minde, is a great benefit euen in reſpect of our owne priuate vſe. But the ſufficiencie that is here ſpoken of is alſo to giue to others, as appeares by the latter part of the verſe, by which words we may alſo ſee to what ende we ſhould vſe that ſufficiencie that the Lord hath giuen vs, namly to abound in euery good work. We ſee what good thoughts be in the hearts of the ſeruants of God, when God giueth them aboundance in reſpect of the thoughts that be in the mindes of wicked

men in their aboundance. *Is not this great Babel*, saith Nabuchadnezzar, *that I haue built*, Dan.4.27. Hamon bragged that he was promoted aboue the princes of the King, Ester 4.11. *Soule, soule, take thy rest*, saith the rich man, Luk.12.19. But what saith Dauid after his glorious victories, *What an indignitie is it*, saith he, *that I should dwell in an house of Cedar, and that the arke of God should remain in curtaines*, 2.Sam.7.2. *Is there any left of Sauls house*, saith he, *that I may shew kindnes vnto him for Ionathans sake*, 2.Sam. 9.1. He sent to all the places where he had beene entertained, 2.Sam.30.26. We must not bestow a litle and the worst of our goods vpon the poore and vpon good vses, but our first fruits, or the chiefe of our goods, Prov.3.9. Exod.34.26. Gen.4.4. the fattest must be bestowed vpon the seruice of god, Malach.3.10. Worldly minded men that are onely giuen to getting, when they should entertaine straungers which haue occasion to come to towne, thinke the time lost that is spent that waies, and that such

matters ſhould not be ſtoode vpon: notwithſtanding the Apoſtle ſaith, *giue your ſelues to hoſpitalitie*, Rom. 12. 13. And why ſhould men thinke that the beſtowing of time about the well vſing of their goods, ſhould not be much more acceptable vnto God, then the getting of them, eſpecially ſeeing the Scripture whē it ſpeaketh of the getting of them, it ſaith, *vſe the world as if you vſed it not*, 1. Cor. 7. But whē it ſpeaks of the well imployment of them it ſaith, *giue your ſelues thereunto, be not forgetful of it*, Ebr. 13. 2.

9 *As it is written, He hath ſpar ſed abroad, and hath giuen to the poore: his beneuolence remaineth for euer.*

The Apoſtle prooueth the truth of that which he had affirmed in the former verſe, namely that thoſe which giue ſhall haue wherewithall to giue ſtill. He doth prooue it by the ſcripture. The ſcripture is ſo certen a thing, that if any that hath liued amongſt vs, with whome we haue beene very well acquainted, ſhould riſe from the dead, and tel vs from the experience of that

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which he had ſeene, that vnmercifull rich men are tormented in fire, yet ſhould we beleeue the ſcripture a thouſand times more then his report. *They haue the writings of Moſes and the Prophets*, ſaith Chriſt, *if they beleeue not them, neither will they beleeue though one riſe from the dead*, Luk. 16. The Church of Rome doth goe about to leſſon the authoritie of this argument, by ſaying that if any make a queſtion about the meaning of any place of Scripture, then the ſcripture muſt not be iudge in this caſe, but the Church. But we read in the 4. of Matthew, that when Satan abuſed the ſcripture and ſaide, *It is written, He ſhall giue his angels charge ouer thee, that thou daſh not thy foot againſt a ſtone*, that Chriſt did not flie to the iudgement of any other, but makes the ſcripture alone of it ſelfe to iuſtifie and to vphold it ſelfe: *It is written*, ſaith he, *thou ſhalt not tempt the Lord thy God. He that giueth to the poore*, ſaith Salomon, *lendeth vnto the Lord.* The Lord giues them a bill of his hand that he will ſee them paide with ad-

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vantage. And it is a ſtraunge caſe that men will beleeue euery meane man vpon a bill of his hand, and yet the Lord as if he were a bankerout, when he offers his bill it will not be taken. The bleſsings that the Lord hath beſtowed already vpon the rich, in making them as it were the elder brothers ſhould make them to be good to their yõger brothers. But this becauſe it is blacke-worke, the Lord will not ſtand vpon it: & becauſe in any caſe he would haue them prouided for, he is content to enter into bondes, and to become ſurety for the payment thereof. The poore are the men that we ſhould giue vnto: for howeſoeuer rich friends may feaſt one another ſometimes, yet our vſuall feaſting ſhould be for the poore, Luk. 14. 12. We being much giuen to outward things, becauſe bidding of the poore hath not ſo much ſhewe nor glorie in it as hath the bidding of the rich, therefore we are wont to delight more in the one then in the other. But if we ſhall conſider we muſt avoide the luſt of the fleſh, the luſt of the eye, and the pride of life, and that

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those things which are highly accounted of amongst men, are abhominable vnto god: then we shall be of another minde: *giue strong drinke vnto him that is readie to perish*, Prov. 31. saith Salomon. We must bid the poore to our houses notwithstanding our collection money: for there was a collection in Christ his time, Marke, 12. 43. And yet we are taught that we should bid the poore, the blinde, and the lame; many be the things which may incourage vs vnto this duty. In respect of God, he liketh best of those duties which are done to our brethrē, without hauing any respect vnto our selues, whē they are done with a single eye, not to rebound vpon our selues. In respect also of the poore, it must needes be more comfortable to them, then to other guestes; for it may be they eate not one good meale in a moneth, and the full dispiseth an honycōbe, but to the hungry man euery sowre thing is sweete. It will helpe men also against that disdaine which is naturally in men, for when we admit them to eate at our table, it is a token that we doe

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not disdaine them. It is a meanes to stirre vp our selues otherwise to be mercifull vnto them: for when we see nothing but plenty, when we heare of nothing but plentie, it is an hard matter then to consider of the estate of poore men; but when we see thē, and talke with them, if it be done warily without vpbraiding of thē by their poore estate, then are we besides feeding of them, otherwise comfortable vnto them, for because they were not brought vp as we haue beene, they cannot tell howe to apply themselues in their speech vnto vs, therefore should we apply our selues vnto thē. We must consider that as no other duty, so is not this pleasant vnto our nature, but when Christ commandeth it, that should make it pleasant: If we would consider that euery duty doth consist the denying of our selues, then we shall easily see that this pleaseth God better then the beeing in more delightfull company: and it should make it delightfull, when we consider that those that doe thus, Christ will set them downe at his table, he good himselfe and

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in his own person attend vpon them, Luk. 1237. his meaning is that he wil giue them most comfortable entertainment. It remaineth now to speake of the ende, for the which this testimony of scripture was especially alleadged by the Apostle, namely to assure those which giue, that they shall haue wherewithall to giue still. And we may see the truth of this, as it were by a demonstration: when rich men be much in bidding one another, it asketh great expēses, for they looke for a sumptcous entertainment being accustomed to a plentifull diet at home: but the poore beeing acquainted with a meane diet, a little prouision wil content them: so that by this meanes, besides the excesse of riot which is wont to be by reason of the great variety of dishes, and length of time great charges are also preuented. When men bidde their rich friendes, they are wont to set out their wealth & their port with plate and other furniture, as he did of whome we reade in the first of Hester, to shewe the glory of his kingdome. All these thinges be auoided

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by bidding of the poore, so that men shall be able to bidde them still, that their benevolence may remaine for euer: neither shal they onely haue wherewithall to giue, but they also shall haue a minde & a good will to giue, which is as great a gift as a mã can wish to be in a man. A man is in no request which is not ready to binde others vnto him by kindnesse. Kindnes to other giftes is as the face to other parts of the bodie: This kindnes also is vnto all other gifts, as the spirit is vnto the body; for it is the life and mouer of them, for otherwise they be as dead in our selues. Onely by kindnes are they conueyed to others, euen iustice it selfe without this bountifulnesse is as an handsome: and comely body is that hath a crabbed face vpon it; euen the withered vine tree is more regarded then is the stately oke, because of the goodnesse thereof.

11 *Also he that findeth seede to the sower, will minister likewise bread for food, and multiply your seede, and increase the fruits of your beneuolence.*

12 *That on all partes you may be made*

rich

rich vnto all liberallitie, which cauſeth through vs thankſgiuing vnto god.

10 He confirmes his former ſpeech anſwering an obiection; for it might be obiected that there is not the like reaſon of the poore, that their is of the feild, for the one is not ſo yeelding as is the other: he telleth vs therefore that it is god that cauſeth the earth to be thus yeldable: & we hauing the promiſe of god that he will cauſe that to be as yeeldable vnto vs, as that is which is ſcattered vpon the earth, is as mightie & as willing to performe it the one way as the other. Whether we vnderſtand the ſpeech in wiſhing manner, that God will miniſter foode, or whether it be ſet down as a promiſe, it is not materiall: for we muſt pray for nothing, but for that for the which we haue a promiſe: and if we haue a promiſe for any thing, we may be bould to pray for it, and we are ſure that we ſhall haue it. As the Lord therefore doth giue to the husbandmã that ſoweth his groũd not onely that which is ſufficient for the maintenance of his family, but he giueth

him alſo ſeed to ſow his ground againe, & ſo doth he from yeere to yeere: ſo he that doth as it were ſowe his money vpon the poore, the Lord doth not onely giue him wherewithall to maintaine his family, but he giueth him alſo to ſow vpon the poore from yeere to yeere, he giueth him ability and alſo minde to doe it, for to him that hath ſhall be giuen. On the other ſide, he that is miſerable continueth miſerable ſtill, though he hath neuer a child and knowes not for whome he gathereth his money: yet he hath no heart to beſtowe any thing, god will not honour him with any ſuch honourable ſeruice. 11 This hauing of an heart to beſtowe his goodes, is the thing that deſerueth the name of riches, as Chriſt teacheth vs, Luk. 16. 12. For as an owner is worthy to be accounted more welthy thē a little farmer that is tenant at will or during his life; ſo is it in this caſe, for theſe riches a man carrieth to the graue with him, Rev. 14. 13. and God in mercy will reward them with an euerlaſting reward. But of the other riches, it is ſaid, naked came I in-

to this world, and naked ſhall I goe out againe. He doth ſtire them vp to bountifulneſſe by the bleſſed fruite, and from the cõfortable effect thereof; for it cauſeth euen the moſt excellent duty, euen the duty of thankſgiuing vnto God, which duty becauſe it is repeated in the next verſe, I will therefore then ſpeake of it. In the meane time we are not to omit it, that he ſaith it cauſeth thankſgiuing through vs, meaning throngh the miniſtrie of the goſpell: if it ſhould be beſtowed vpon a profane people, where by reaſon of their vnthankfulneſſe god ſhould haue had no honour by them, this might wel haue cooled their affectiõ from giuing: for without the goſpell men are vnthankefull, Luk. 6. 35. they ſwallowe vp the bleſsings of god without ſence. But if reliefe be beſtowed where the goſpell is, then god ſhall not looſe his honour: for your releife through vs cauſeth thankſgiuing vnto god, ſaith the Apoſtle. If relcife be beſtowed vpon rogues and vagabonds, god can haue no ſuch honour by it: but when relcife is beſtowed vpõ ſuch

haue bene taught, that the meanes whereby men are comforted are as it were the handes of god wherby he conueieth nourishment vnto them, then god shall haue honour.

12 *For the ministration of this seruice, not onely supplieth the necessities of the Saints, But also is aboundant by the thanks giuing of many vnto God.*

13 *Which by the experiment of this ministration, praise god for your voluntary submission to the gospell of Christ, and for your liberall distribution to them, and to all men.*

14 *And by their praier for you, desiring after you greatly for the aboundant grace of God in you.*

15 *Thankes therefore be vnto God for his vnspeakeably gift.*

He commmendeth giuing of releise, first because their necessities are releiued, & thē because thereby also god is glorified. But before we speake of either of these, we are to consider of this word seruice, the word doth indifferently signifie any sacrifice that

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is offered vnto god or any publike office that a man is called vnto. But becauſe the drift of the Apoſtle is to ſtirre vp vnto releife, we are to take it in the firſt ſence, for that is fitter for this purpoſe then is the other: eſpecially ſeeing this tearme, a worde I meane of the like ſignification is vſed to ſet out the excellency of releife, Hebr.13.16. Act.10.4. Leaſt the baſenes of the parties vpon whome we are exerciſed in giuing of almes ſhould hinder this duty, we are told that in this duty we are attennding vpon the perſon of god himſelf, in the doing thereof we doe as it were offer ſacrifices vnto god himſelfe. In a family euery man is deſirous to be imployed about thoſe duties that concerne the maſter or the miſtres her ſelfe, as to be their chamber ſeruants, to attend vpon them there: but to be further remooued from them, and to be occupied in duties in out-houſes where they ſhall ſeldome ſee their maſter, though theſe ſeruices belong to the ſeruing of their maſter, yet being out of their maſters ſight they think that they are out of their mind:

and therefore they had rather chooſe the former ſeruices that were ſpoke of before rather thē the other. The Apoſtle therfore tels vs that the giuing of almes is the beſt kinde of ſeruice that a man can deuiſe. Chriſt calls thoſe the great commaundements that concerne god himſelfe, and the other that concernes men are like vnto them. This therefore in ſome ſence being one of thoſe great commaundements, the Lord in mercy muſt needs giue a great reward therevnto; it is ſaide that releife ſupplieth the neceſsities of god his ſeruants: men it may be had rather do duty to thoſe that haue not ſuch neede of their helpe, but this kinde of ſeruice is more acceptable vnto God, for it is a better prooſe and argument of ſound loue, then that ſeruice is which is imploied about thoſe that be rich: and ſo by conſequence the lord muſt needs like better of the one then of the other. It is a common ſaying, that true loue doth deſcend and not aſcend; and therefore it is obſerued that the grandfather or the father doth loue the child or the nephew, better

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then the childe or the nephewe doth loue the grādfather or the father. In giuing we must haue respect to the necessities of mē, which is a thing not so wel thought vpon, whereof it commeth to passe that men wil haue much speach about the prouision for some, but about the prouision for some other they will haue no speach at all though their necessitie be much greater. To haue respect vnto the necessities of men in giuing, is much more acceptable thē to giue hand ouer head: & therfore if men would sit downe and inquire and take the names of such as stand in neede of helpe, in the places where they dwell, to consider of thē accordingly: this though it be troublesome yet it is a great deale more acceptable then penny or two-pēny doole. For the thinge which a man must aime at in giuing, is to distribute to the necessities of the Saints, Rom. 12. 13. Act. 2. 45. For men must honour the poore in their kinde, as they honour the rich in their kinde. And as to giue the more honour to him which is lesse honorable, can not be done without offe-

ring wrong to the more honorable perſō. So to honor thoſe poore ſaints that haue moſt neede with the les releiſe, can not be doone without offeringe contempt vnto them. The other good that comes by giuing is thankſgiuing vnto god, we muſt be thākful vnto the means as the ſcripture techeth vs, Kings 8. 66. Rom 16. 4. But the lord muſt be the centure and the reſtinge place of our thanks, this thankfulnes is ſaid to be better then any ſacrifiſe pſal 50. we are much called vpon for it, as pſal 107. the paſſeouer, the ſacramēt of the ſupper, were of purpoſe ordeined to ſtir vs vp to thankfulnes. The cauſe wherfore the forbidding of meats is acounted the doctrine of diuils, is becauſe it taketh away occaſiō of thankfulnes. 1. Timo 4. 3. The thing wherby the ſeruants of god haue mooued the lord to looke mercifully vpon them in their affliction hath bene the vowing of thankfulneſſe. The thing which hath troubled the godly in their troubles and griefes hath beene this, namely, that the duty of thankfulneſſe hath then beene greately diminiſhed,

shed, Ioel, 1.13. Seeing therefore that this excellent duty is procured by giuing releife, this should be a notable motion to make vs forward this waies: and he doth amplify the matter when he saith that thanks shall be giuen by many. Many knowing the hardnesse of those times, no doubt prayed vnto God to open the hearts of men to regard their poore brethren: and when they heard that God had opened mens hearts they could not choose but be thankefull, 2. Cor. 1.11. When many ioyne together in the duty of tankefulnesse, it makes those which doe giue thankes, to be more feruēt in that duty: euen as many stickes beeing laid vpon the fire makes the flame the greater; and the Lord loueth feruent praier and feruent thankefulnesse, Iam. 5.16. The honour of a King consisteth in the multitude of subiects; so doth the honour of God consist in the multitude of those which are truely thankefull vnto him.

13 They will praise God not onely for their maintenance and releife but because that

that thereby they testifie their true subiection to the Gospel, as chap.8.5. for the gospel came from the Iewes whome they were to relieue: for we read, Act.8.4. that by the persecution of Steven those that kept altogether at Ierusalem before, were now scattered, and preached the word euery where amongst the Gentiles, in so much that it is alleadged as a reason by the Apostle: wherefore he would haue the Gentiles contribute to Ierusalem, because the Law came out of Sion. If the Gentiles be made partakers of their spirituall things, their dutie is also to minister vnto them in carnall things, Rom.15.27. saith the Apostle. We of the Gentiles were wild oliues, and therefore were to be planted into the naturall oliue before we could thriue. It is said Zachar.8.23. that tenne men of all languages of the nations, shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Iew, and say we will goe with you, for we haue heard that God is with you: so that we see that the thanks that God should haue by this, should not be onely for relieuing of them, but for a greater

ter and a more excellent consideration. So that we are taught hereby, especially such of vs as are ministers of the word of God, wherefore and for what cause we should especially reioyce when God mooues his people to haue any comfortable consideration of vs, namely not so much because our bodies receiues some refreshing thereby, as it is an argument that they haue felt sweetnes and comfort in our ministerie, this should make vs triumph for ioy, for it makes the Angels in heauen to reioyce, Luk. 15. as it did also the people of the Iewes, Act. 11. They did professe the gospel before, but this that the Apostle here speakes of was an argument that it was the gospel I meane with much power amongst them. In that the Apostle doth so much commend the [voluntarie] submitting of a mans selfe to the truth, it is a question with some whether men are to be forced to the exercises of religion: but it is plaine that they are to be forced thereunto by such as haue authoritie. For though the Lord doth not like of that mans seruice

that commeth to the place where his honour dwelleth with a constreyned minde, yet he liketh well of the seruice of the magistrates in this forme of duty, which is so willing to haue others be brought to religion that he forceth them therevnto when they will no tbe otherwise allured: and euen those that at the first are drawne by violence to heare the word of God, in continuance of time will come willingly therevnto: for it is onely the word of god which must procure an appetite. *No man commeth vnto me*, saith Christ, *except my father draweth him*. And there is none of vs which doe now most willingly submit our selues vnto the gospell, but at the first we came to heare it of custome, because others did so, or for noueltie, or for some other such respect: and we may hope so, because the Lord hath promised a blessing to correction. *Correct the scorner*, saith Salomon, *and the foolish will take heede, chasten this child for there is hope*. But as for these men their giuing was an argument or manifest shewe of their voluntary sub-

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mitting of themselues to the Gospell, because this releife was to be gathered by the consent or agreement of all churches, chap.8.24. The reasons which haue beene alleadged to bring men by force vnto the gospel, may serue also to prooue the like inforcement for releise, if otherwise men will not be brought or incouraged thereunto. 14. If we would but consider that the Lord hath put a blessing into the handes of distressed persons, to bestowe vpon such as doe releeue them, Iob, 29.13. then men would soone be brought to giue to the poore that they may pray for them, Ezra, 6.10. It was the thing which made Darius so bountifull, that they might pray for the kings life & for the life of his sonne. This releife shall make all good men desire after them greately, which may be a very cheereful and comfortable assurance vnto vs that god himselfe doth regard vs, when the seruants of god doth long after vs. As the Lord of Hoastes liueth, saith Elisha vnto Ahab, in whose sight

ſight I ſtand: If it were not that I regarde the preſence of Iehoſaphat the king of Iuda, I would not haue looked towards thee nor ſeene thee. It is a great fauour to haue ſuch a one ſpeake a good word for vs, to whoſe ſpeech the prince wil moſt willingly harken: but the poore beeing ſuch as God hath promiſed to giue the hearing vnto, it is therefore a greater benefit then we take it to be, to haue them pray for vs. Thoſe which reſerue all their gifts vntill after their death, doe neither giue any teſtimony that they truſt not in vncertaine riches but in the liuing Lord, neither haue they this benefit of prayer which is is here ſpoken of: for to what purpoſe ſhould men pray for them at ſuch time when praier will do them no good. As this benefit of praier ſhould ſet more a worke at all times to be bountifull, ſo when men are viſited with ſickneſſe or any other greate trouble, the hope of finding releife thereby ſhould ſet them aworke to be bountifull, for the Lord hath promiſed mercie to the mercifull. 15 The Apoſtle beeing

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perſwaded that he ſhould not looſe his wordes, as if the thing which he perſwads them vnto had beene already done, he breaketh forth into thankſgiuing for it: & leaſt any ſhould thinke that he had ſpoken as much for releife as can poſsibly be ſaide or conceiued: he ſaith that is an vnſpekable gift of God, and none of his ordinarie gifts to releiue the poore Saints of god: the widows ſhewed the garments for the poore which Dorcas had made, and that not after her death, but whileſt ſhee was aliue with them, Act. 9.39. thinking that if any thing would be a meanes to cauſe Peter to lift vp feruent grones vnto the Lord, as he might reſtore her to them againe, that would doe it.

FINIS.